

Politics and Diplomacy in the Mediterranean of the 10th Century: Al-Andalus and Byzantium

Elsa Fernandes Cardoso

1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss which political motivations brought together the Umayyads of al-Andalus and Byzantium, in the Mediterranean world of the 10th century. As political motivations are not stated clearly in the sources that narrate these exchanges, the main question of this essay is to understand mutual interests shared by both powers. Thus, which political circumstances would provide the motivation for such intense diplomatic exchanges and alliance between the Byzantine Empire and the peripheral westernmost power of the Mediterranean Sea?

Exchanges between Byzantium and the Umayyads of al-Andalus in the 10th century are not unprecedented. A first Byzantine mission sent to al-Andalus was received in Cordoba, around 840, by the *'amīr*¹ 'Abd al-Raḥmān II (r. 822–52). However, the political situation of Byzantium and the Mediterranean in the 10th century was not the same as under the second Amorion emperor. Diplomatic contacts in the 9th century were an initiative of Theophilos, as described by Ibn Hayyān of Cordoba, an 11th-century historian who transmits the letter sent from the Byzantine capital and the description of the stay of al-Ghazāl at Constantinople.² Ibn Hayyān suggests that the purpose of the embassy was to establish an alliance with 'Abd al-Raḥmān II against the 'Abbasids, who harassed Byzantium, referring to the conquest of Amorion in 838 by the 'Abbasid caliph, and to the loss of Crete, around 827, to Andalusī adventurers.³ Crete was conquered circa 824–27 by a group

1 This article uses the *Cambridge History of Islam* system for Arabic transliteration.

2 Ibn Hayyān, *Crónica de los emires al-Hakam I y 'Abd ar-Rahman II entre los años 796 y 847* [*al-Muqtabis II-I*], trans. Mahmud 'Ali Makki and Federico Corriente, (Zaragoza, 2001), pp. 294–98. See “Noticia de la correspondencia entre el emperador bizantino y el emir 'Abd al-Raḥmān.”

3 I have discussed both al-Ghazāl's mission to Constantinople and the political motivations of exchanges between Theophilos and 'Abd al-Raḥmān II elsewhere. See Elsa Cardoso, “Diplomacy and oriental influence in the court of Cordoba (9th-10th centuries)” MA diss.

of Andalusis, expelled from al-Andalus.⁴ From Crete, it was possible to control the trade between the Mediterranean and the Aegean Seas, which allowed the Andalusis, at some point, to enter the Propontis Sea (nowadays the Sea of Marmara).⁵

Furthermore, Sicily was gradually being conquered, from 827 onwards, by the Aghlabid dynasty, tributary of the 'Abbasid Caliphate, resulting in the subsequent loss of full control over the coastal regions of the Italian peninsula and the western Mediterranean, as the strait between Ifrīqiyya (nowadays Tunisia) and Sicily fell in the hands of the Aghlabids. However, diplomatic exchanges between Cordoba and Byzantium in the 9th century did not continue, as 'Abd al-Raḥmān II could not meet the emperor's requests.⁶ Furthermore, the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'taṣim and Theophilos made a treaty in 841. Thus, what political background could have allowed the renewal of an alliance between the Byzantines and the Umayyads of Cordoba in the 10th century? After all, both powers were established at opposite ends of the Mediterranean and had coexisted in such space more than a century without any known official political contacts.

Diplomatic exchanges with Byzantium were renewed under the rule of the first caliph of al-Andalus, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, emperor of Byzantium. Both Byzantine and Arab sources account the exchange of several missions, which took place between 946 and 972. Political motivations offered the perfect excuse for the central role played by ceremonial. Although historians who research on diplomacy should not

(University of Lisbon, 2015); "The scenography of power in al-Andalus: the embassy of Yaḥya al-Ghazāl to Constantinople," *Hamsa. Journal of Judaic and Islamic Studies* (2015), 54–64.

4 For the conquest of Crete and the history of its Emirate see Vassilios Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs (ca. 824). A turning point in the struggle between Byzantium and Islam* (Athens, 1984).

5 Marius Canard, "Ikritish," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, B. Lewis et al., eds., vol. 3, H-IRAM (Leiden, 1986), 1083; Hans Thurn, ed., *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, CFHB 5 (Berlin, 1973), p. 44; John Wortley, trans., *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History 811–1057* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 46.

6 Eduardo Manzano believes that Theophilos misconceived the true power of 'Abd al-Raḥmān II over the western Mediterranean, as the emperor understood the Umayyad 'amīr possessed a naval fleet. See Eduardo Manzano Moreno, "Byzantium and al-Andalus in the ninth century," in *Byzantium in the ninth century: Dead or alive?*, Leslie Brubaker, ed. (Aldershot, 1998), p. 227. Manzano states categorically that the fourth Umayyad sovereign of al-Andalus could not set any Mediterranean policy. It is true that he did not own a naval fleet, nevertheless it appears that the 'amīr controlled several coastal sites, such as *ḥuṣūn* (sing. *ḥiṣn*) or *ribāṭāt* (sing. *ribāṭ*) (fortresses), as well as vessels. See Jorge Lirola Delgado, "El poder naval de al-Andalus en la época del califato omeya (siglo IV hégira/X era cristiana)" (Ph.D diss. University of Granada, 1991), pp. 88–98.

neglect ceremonial and gift-exchange, this article focus on the political dimension of these exchanges in a broader Mediterranean framework.⁷

De Ceremoniis, by Constantine VII, reports the arrival of a Cordovan mission to Constantinople between 946 and 949. These exchanges are also accounted by Arab sources, such as Ibn Ḥayyān, Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn 'Idhārī and al-Maqqarī, who report with detail the arrival and reception of Byzantine ambassadors.

The political framework of the Iberian Peninsula in the 10th century contributed for the emergence of al-Andalus in both shores of the western Mediterranean. 'Abd al-Raḥmān III succeeded his grandfather 'Abd Allāh in 912. The Umayyad family held the Emirate of Cordoba since 756, when 'Abd al-Raḥmān I, grandson of the Umayyad Caliph of Damascus, Hishām bin 'Abd al-Malik, took refuge in the Iberia Peninsula, after another family, the 'Abbasids, took the caliphal title in the East and massacred the masculine lineage of the Umayyads. 'Abd al-Raḥmān III inherited a fragmented Emirate where several governors were powerful enough to declare their independence from Cordoba. Although governors recognized nominally the central power, when the new *'amīr* ascended to the throne, Cordoba and its surroundings were the only territory controlled *de facto* by the Umayyads. The central power had to deal with governors who had associated their political administrative position with their own lineage. Thus, the administrative role of the *wilāiya* (governorate) of a specific province had been affiliated within a family lineage, inherited

7 As this article aims at discussing the political motivations of exchanges between al-Andalus and Byzantium in the 10th century, I will not debate on the number of embassies exchanged between both powers neither its ceremonial features, which are discussed elsewhere. See Elsa Cardoso, "The scenography of power in al-Andalus and the 'Abbasid and Byzantine ceremonials: Christian ambassadorial receptions in the court of Cordoba in a comparative perspective," *Medieval Encounters. Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue* (January, 2018), 1–45, DOI: 10.1163/15700674-12340007. For the debate on the number of embassies exchanged between both powers, see the thorough study of Juan Signes Codoñer, "Bizancio y al-Andalus en los siglos IX y X," in *Bizancio y la Península Ibérica. De la Antigüedad Tardía a la Edad Moderna*, Inmaculada Pérez Martín and Pedro Bádenas de la Peña, eds. (Madrid, 2004), pp. 177–246. As for the dating of the embassies see Otto Kresten, "Zur Chrysographie in den Auslandsschreiben der byzantinischen Kaiser," *Römische historische Mitteilungen*, 40 (1998), 139–86. The political dimensions of other aspects of these exchanges, such as official missives, peace treaties, ceremonial, economic aspects and gift-exchange have also been surveyed by Nicholas Drocourt in several studies, which privilege an approach of remarking several exemplary cases in order to discuss a diplomatic common language of medieval courts. See Nicholas Drocourt, "Christian-Muslim diplomatic relations. An overview of the main sources and themes of encounter (600–1000)," in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 2 (900–1050)*, David Thomas et al., eds. (Leiden, 2010), pp. 29–72; Nicholas Drocourt, "Passing on Political Information between Major Powers: The Key-Role of Ambassadors between Byzantium and Some of its Neighbours," *Al-Masaq* 24: 1 (2012), 91–112, DOI: 10.1080/09503110.2012.655586.

from father to son. The endemic fragmentation of power was the clear result of a frontier society, such as the Iberian Peninsula, where unstable loyalties prevailed.

One of the most threatening families were the Banū Hafsūn, a lineage which proclaimed their Iberian genealogy, who had resorted to Bobastro, a mountain region quite near the capital, to declare their independence. Among other accusations, this family, at some point, had presumably declared their allegiance towards the Shi'i Ismaili Fatimid Caliphate. After a successful military campaign, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III was able to victoriously enter Bobastro, where he believed the Banū Hafsūn had converted to Christianity, and thus the family were charged with the religious crime of apostasy.

This success offered the 'amīr the perfect moment for finally claiming the Umayyad Caliphate of al-Andalus. In 929, he despatched several letters to all the governors of al-Andalus, proclaiming his legitimacy to a title long overdue, taking as a *laqab* (honorific title, typically a caliphal privilege) al-Nāṣir li-din Allāh, "the champion in the faith of God." The volatile situation experienced by the central power, before the 'reunification' achieved by the first caliph of Cordoba, meant that no external policy was endured. Mediterranean diplomacy is not reported during such political fragmentation, most certainly because the 'amīr was troubled in securing his feeble power. The recognition of the power of al-Andalus by a strong Mediterranean ally, such as the Byzantine Empire, was also part of the legitimacy and propaganda program of al-Nāṣir li-din Allāh.

Furthermore, proclaiming the Caliphate of al-Andalus was the logical consequence after the Fatimids rose to power and declared their own caliphate in 909. The Ismaili Fatimid Caliphate had first established itself in 909 in al-Maḥdiyya, then in al-Manṣūriyya and finally in Cairo when they conquered Egypt in 969. The Fatimids – a name that declared their genealogy through the Prophet Muḥammad's daughter, Fatima al-Zahra' – were able to expand their territories into North Africa, defeating the Aghlabids. They inherited their power in Sicily, where Byzantium had lost its last stronghold of Taormina in 902. Their expansion was potentially dangerous both for the eastern and western parts of the Mediterranean. Both al-Andalus, which ruled several regions in the Maghreb al-Aqṣā, and Byzantium had to pay attention to this new emergent power.

2 Politics and Diplomacy under 'Abd al-Raḥmān III

I shall now discuss political motivations for the exchanges between Cordoba and Byzantium. The declaration of a western caliphate in al-Andalus by 'Abd al-Raḥmān III and his *de facto* territorial power over the whole peninsula resulted

as well in the caliph's expansionist agenda. The Maghreb al-Aqṣā and the western Mediterranean were the obvious territorial and maritime extensions of al-Andalus.⁸ In fact, the Arab geographers describe al-Andalus as a new hub of the Muslim space, competitor of Baghdad, Qayrawan and later on, Cairo.⁹

The recently declared Fatimid Caliphate, in 909, and its successful expansion in North Africa, as well as in Sicily, proved to be a real threat for al-Andalus. Contrary to the political situation of al-Andalus in the 9th century, where the 'Abbasids did not present a real threat towards the existence of al-Andalus, the Fatimids were expanding to east and west of the Maghreb and at this time it was not certain that they would settle in an eastern Mediterranean axis, as in fact happened when they conquered Fustat and founded Cairo in 968. Although the Aghlabids had certainly been the 'Abbasid agents in the western Mediterranean, nevertheless their conquests never presented a real threat to al-Andalus.

With the Fatimids, this was not the case, and they even threatened directly the maritime borders of al-Andalus, as they were able to sack Almeria in 955. Indeed, it was not by coincidence that the Fatimids chose Almeria as the target of their attack. It had become the busiest port of al-Andalus and both its activity, which was only comparable to al-Maḥdiyya, and its name, al-Maḥriyya, represented the rivalry between both powers.¹⁰

Indeed, the preference of 'Abd Allāh for 'Abd al-Raḥmān III being his successor was influenced by this new Mediterranean power. As underlined before, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III inherited a fragmented territory, and the political sedition spread all over al-Andalus, and especially in the Marches regions, which was also a reflexion of the quarrels among the Umayyad family. 'Abd Allāh, in an unprecedented approach, presumably, had his predecessor and brother, al-Mundhir, assassinated, also instigated the death of his son Muḥammad (and father of the future 'Abd al-Raḥmān III) at the hands of his other son, Muṭarrif, and then ordered the assassination of the last, who was suspected of treason. Apparently, 'Abd Allāh nominated his grandson 'Abd al-Raḥmān as his heir apparent and political propaganda played a strong role in the ascension of the first caliph of Cordoba, who was presented as closing a cycle of seven 'umarā', a number with great religious significance for the Fatimid caliphs, and opening, as the eighth 'amīr of al-Andalus, another cycle.¹¹

8 This is an idea expressed by the main supervisor of my PhD dissertation, Professor Hermenegildo Fernandes (Centre for History, University of Lisbon).

9 Christophe Picard, *La Mer des Califes. Une histoire de la Méditerranée musulmane* (Paris, 2015), p. 143.

10 Picard, *La Mer des Califes*, p. 153.

11 Maribel Fierro, "Porque sucedió 'Abd al-Rahman a su abuelo el emir 'Abd Allah," *Al-Qantara* xxvi, 2 (2005), 365–66. The Ismā'īlī Shi'a doctrine is based on the belief of seven Imams.

Thus, the expansion and the structuring of an axis of influence, especially in the Maghrebi Mediterranean shores, was not only an Umayyad ambition, but it was also a necessity, in order to maintain and endure territorial and mercantile power of al-Andalus.

Constantinople had also to deal with the Fatimid threat. Again, the Byzantine Empire had to revive the Sicilian loss. In 902, Taormina was lost, and in 909, the island's ownership falls into the hands of the Fatimid rulers. As 902 marks the fall of the last official Byzantine stronghold of Sicily, the historiography conventionally agrees that such an event also marked the end of an imperial policy over the island. Despite of the conquest of Taormina, a thorough research by Vivien Prigent has proved that neither the Byzantine presence in the island nor an imperial policy on Sicily had ceased.¹² The Fatimid Caliphate also revealed its interests towards southern-Italian shores. In 928, the Fatimids landed in Apulia, stormed Taranto and Otranto, and threatened Campania, which led Salerno and Naples to pay the Fatimid fleet to withdraw from the Italian shores and Romanos Lekapenos to accept the payment of a tribute, between 931 and 932, in exchange for the security of Calabria and Apulia.¹³ It seems that the Byzantine Empire wished for this truce situation to prevail, as in October 946 Constantine VII sent an embassy to al-Maḥdī.¹⁴ This was precisely in the same year and month that *De Ceremoniis* places 'Abd al-Raḥmān III's mission to Constantinople.¹⁵ It seems that it was the Andalusī caliph who took the initiative to resume new exchanges between both powers, as Ibn Ḥayyān places the first Byzantine embassy to 'Abd al-Raḥmān III on 11 Rabi' al-Awwal 338 A.H. (8 September 949).¹⁶ Evidently, the caliph of Córdoba, upon being informed of Fatimid military actions on Italian shores and in

12 Vivien Prigent, "La Politique Sicilienne de Romain Ier Lécapène," in *Guerre et société au Moyen Âge. Byzance Occident (VIIIe-XIIIe siècle)*, Dominique Barthélemy and Jean-Claude Cheynet, eds. (Paris, 2010), pp. 63–84.

13 Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdī. The Rise of the Fatimids*, trans. Michael Bonner (Leiden, 1996), p. 238.

14 Maribel Fierro, *Abderramán III y el califato omeya de Córdoba* (San Sebastián, 2011), p. 141.

15 Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, trans. Ann Moffat and Maxeme Tall, vol. 2 (Canberra, 2012), pp. 570–88. The date of the first mission of 'Abd al-Raḥmān in Constantinople is still a discussed issue. Otto Kresten points out that usually receptions of ambassadors were held on Sundays, and that October 24, 946 was not a Sunday. Therefore, Kresten suggests that 'Abd al-Raḥmān III's embassy was received on October 24th 947, which was a Sunday, and it was afterwards added to accounts regarding receptions of 946. See Kresten, "Zur Chrysographie in den Auslandsschreiben der byzantinischen Kaiser," pp. 31–4.

16 <http://www.mela.us/committees/hegira.html>. This source has been used to convert Muslim calendar dates to the Christian calendar throughout the text.

Sicily, showed his concern about the growing puissance of the new North-African dynasty. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that the political and territorial situation of Byzantium was not the same as in the 9th century, when Theophilos's desperate situation regarding the Emirate of Crete, the Aghlabids in Sicily and the 'Abbasids in Amorium, triggered the despatch of several embassies to the western Mediterranean courts. Most certainly, upon receiving news on diplomatic relations and a truce achieved between the Fatimids and Constantinople, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III was concerned that this alliance could develop into a joint force which would defend both Fatimid and Byzantine interests in the Mediterranean and North-African shores. Nicholas Drocourt believes the nature of the diplomatic contacts between al-Andalus and Byzantium was the existence of a common enemy, the Fatimids, who were moving from the Ifrīqiyya to Egypt. Moreover, he points out a failed attempt alliance between the Fatimids and the Bulgars, which was put to an end by Byzantium, when an imperial ship captured the emissaries of both powers.¹⁷

As the caliph understood that Byzantium had to accept a truce with the Fatimids, he did not want to waste any time, so he anticipated any potential danger of such an alliance and probably made use of these arguments to achieve an agreement with the Byzantine emperor. If the Italian shores were one of the main concerns for the mercantile interests of the Byzantines, why not send an embassy to Constantinople and discuss mutual territorial and mercantile interests?

In fact, Amalfitan merchants arrived at al-Andalus in the end of Jumādā al-Thānī 330 A.H. (March 942), intending to open the Andalusi trade routes to Amalfitan trade, which they successfully achieved, as the caliph was pleased and acquired most of the merchandise brought to them, and from then on mercantile exchanges between Andalusis and Amalfitans developed.¹⁸ Indeed, *al-Muqtabis* v reports another stay of Amalfitan merchants in al-Andalus, when they arrived among the members of a diplomatic delegation sent by the ruler of Sardinia, once more bringing luxury goods, such as ingots, of both silver and gold, or satin.¹⁹ Anthony Cutler, who underlines its economic consequences, which were fundamental for negotiating trade agreements, has studied gift-exchange during receptions of ambassadors. Declassified as a part of economic history, gift-exchange was dismissed for being perceived

¹⁷ Drocourt, "Christian-Muslim diplomatic relations," p. 51.

¹⁸ Ibn Ḥayyān, *Crónica del Califa 'Abdarraman III an-Nasir entre los años 912 y 942* (*al-Muqtabis* v), trans. Maria Jesús Viguera and Federico Corriente (Zaragoza, 1981), pp. 358–59. Ibn Ḥayyān says that among their luxury products were satin and purple.

¹⁹ Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* v, p. 365.

as a symptom of 'archaic' or 'primitive' societies, and conventionally seen as superfluous luxury goods, without any political consequence.²⁰

The Fatimid power was of course one of the main political concerns regarding exchanges between 'Abd al-Raḥmān III and Constantine VII, and the Ismaili control over the Mediterranean area, comprising Sicily and Italian shores, could not only mean the loss of Umayyad influence in the Maghreb but could also damage its mercantile interests. In fact, Amalfitan merchants were able to draw an axis of mercantile interests from al-Andalus, the Maghreb, Egypt and Syria-Palestine within the Muslim territories, connecting these trade networks to Byzantium.²¹

Juan Signes believes that an alliance based on mutual interests in the Sicilian and North-African shores is proved through the narrative of the Fatimid historian Qāḍī al-Nu'mān.²² In his *Book of Audiences and Travelling*, Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, records that after the Fatimid attack of Almeria in 955, the Umayyad caliph sent an embassy in 344 A.H. (April 955–April 956) to Constantine VII, asking for his help against the Fatimid hegemony, which was conceded to him, and an Andalusí fleet on the shores of Sicily was joined by a Byzantine fleet.²³ Furthermore, al-Nu'mān accounts that the Byzantine fleet was defeated by the Fatimids and fled to the strait of Reggio, though not mentioning what happened to the Umayyad fleet. However, according to this source an embassy of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III was received in Constantinople between 955 and 956. The account of this historian is somehow obscure, as it does not mention details about such a joint expedition or what happened to the Umayyad fleet. However, this does not mean it did not take place. The attack on Almeria in 955 might have had an impact on the political power of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III. Of course this attack was intended more to provoke and serve legitimacy purposes, as the Fatimids did not intend an open military conflict against the Umayyads, who by this time had a strong and developed fleet, a caliphal attribute of power.²⁴

In fact, the Fatimid attack of Almeria in 955 seems to be a direct response to an Umayyad attack against a Sicilian ship in the same year. Lévi-Provençal asserts that in 955, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III sent a ship to Alexandria, with merchandise intended for trade, and when sailing through Ifrīqiyya's shores came

20 Anthony Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab and Related Economies," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001), pp. 247–48.

21 Dominique Valérian, "Amalfi e il mondo musulmano: un laboratorio per le città marinare italiane?," *Rassegna del Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana* XX (2010), p. 201.

22 Signes, "Bizancio y al-Andalus," p. 237.

23 Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Kitāb al-Majālis wa al-Musayarāt* [Book of Audiences and Travelling], ed. Al-Habib et al. (Tunis, 1978), pp. 166–67. This particular passage is translated by Juan Signes, "Bizancio y al-Andalus," pp. 237–38.

24 Picard, *La Mer des Califes*, pp. 154–55.

across a Sicilian ship from the Fatimid governor of Sicily to the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz. The Umayyad ship attacked the Sicilian, taking its merchandise as well as official documents for the Fatimid caliph. Following this event, al-Mu'izz sent his representative in Sicily, al-Ḥassan bin 'Alī, to attack with his fleet the Andalusī shores, devastating Almeria.²⁵

If Qāḍī al-Nu'mān mentions that an Umayyad fleet met a Byzantine fleet around 955–56 in the Sicilian shores, Ibn 'Idhārī accounts that after the Almeria attack, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III sent the admiral of his fleet, Ghālib, in 345 A.H. (April 956–April 957), to devastate the Ifrīqiyya's shores, after curses were pronounced against the Fatimids from mosques all over al-Andalus, and letters were sent to the governors.²⁶ Perhaps this fleet mentioned by Ibn 'Idhārī could be the same mentioned by Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, and while the Byzantine fleet was supposed to devastate and regain some of the Byzantine possessions in Sicily, the Umayyad fleet was devastating the shores of Ifrīqiyya, and thus making a statement that the Maghreb shores were one of 'Abd al-Raḥmān's policies. Therefore, this attack mentioned by Ibn 'Idhārī could be part of a planned joint attack between the caliph of Cordoba and Constantine VII, hence corroborating the narrative of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān. While one of the fleets was devastating the Sicilian part of the Fatimid possessions, another was attacking the shores of Ifrīqiyya, and therefore both could have been mutual diversions for each other. Nevertheless, the Fatimid fleet reacted quickly and concentrated its forces against the Byzantine fleet, which was defeated, as mentioned by Qāḍī al-Nu'mān.

Lévi-Provençal further mentions, though not providing the reader with the source, that Ghālib, al-Nāṣir's admiral, with a fleet of 70 ships, attacked Marsa al-Kharaz, Sousse and Tabarka. Due to the fact that each attack, either from the Umayyads or the Fatimids, led to a new offensive, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III's North-African policy, in his last years, is described by Lévi-Provençal as bitter, since the Fatimids made sure to attack his most precious possessions in the Maghreb, such as Tahart, leaving him with only two strongholds, Tangier and Ceuta.²⁷

'Abd al-Raḥmān III's foreign policy, regarding his interests in North Africa, was based on a chain of influences in the Maghreb, where he kept his agents. Indeed, Ibn 'Idhārī describes that 'Abd al-Raḥmān III kept agents in North Africa and in 946 he received Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin Kulayb in Cordoba,

25 Évariste Lévi-Provençal, "España Musulmana, hasta la caída del califato de Córdoba (711–1031 J.C.)," in *Historia de España*, ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal, vol. IV (Madrid, 1982), pp. 319–20.

26 Ibn 'Idhārī, *Histoire de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne intitulée al-Bayyano'l-Mogrib*, trans. E. Fagnan, vol. II (Algiers, 1904), p. 366.

27 Lévi-Provençal, "España Musulmana," p. 321.

who had arrived from Qayrawan to announce the death of Abū al-Qāsim bin ‘Ubayd Allāh, the Fatimid caliph who died in Maḥdiyya while being sieged by Abū Zayd, and succeeded by his son Ismā‘īl.²⁸ This was of course the Fatimid Caliph al-Qā‘im bi-‘Amr Allāh, or Abū al-Qāsim, who died in 946 while being sieged by the rebellious Abū Yazīd, a Zanata Berber *khārījī*, known as *Ṣāhib al-Ḥimār* (*the possessor of the donkey*), a symbol of his humbleness. Abū Yazīd is said to have sent agents to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III as he intended to recognize the Umayyad Caliphate and obtain his military help against the Fatimids.²⁹ However, the Cordovan caliph did not react in time, and the Fatimids defeated Abū Yazīd. In the light of this specific political framework, which witnessed the fragility of the Fatimids, threatened at their own capital, Byzantium and al-Andalus might have seen in 946, the year in which the Andalusī-Byzantine exchanges restarted, a window of opportunity to damage the Fatimid power.

Another presumable, though secondary, topic of these exchanges was perhaps the situation in Crete. It is known that Constantine VII tried to disembark on the island at this time. *De Ceremoniis* describes the preparation of an expedition in 949.³⁰ Lévi-Provençal also mentions the Byzantine emperor’s attempts to reconquer Crete, adding that, nevertheless, Constantine VII did not have any valid excuse to evoke the responsibility of al-Andalus towards the actions of Abū Ḥafṣ’ descendants, and hence he assigns to the motivations of these exchanges a cultural role. As pointed out above, there is an unquestionable cultural role for these embassies, as chroniclers report several of such exchanges.³¹ The political impact caused by ceremonial features displayed during diplomatic receptions is evident. Ritual gestures and actions translated the nature of the exchanges, either recognition of political power, truce requests, negotiation of alliances, or recognition of tributary states. A common ceremonial language was understandable between these Mediterranean courts, which influenced each other, incorporating new ritual traditions.³² The example of the description of the reception of Byzantine ambassadors in the palatine-city of Madīna al-Zahrā’, near Cordoba, evidences the high political status attributed

28 Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayyān II*, p. 354.

29 Fierro, *Abderrahmán III*, pp. 126–27.

30 Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis*, pp. 662–79.

31 For the intellectual dimension of Arab-Byzantine exchanges see Jakub Sypiański, “Arabo-Byzantine relations in the 9th and 10th centuries as an area of cultural rivalry,” in *Proceedings of the international Symposium Byzantium and The Arab World Encounter of Civilizations*, A. Kralides and A. Gkoutzioukostas, eds. (Thessaloniki, 2013), pp. 465–78.

32 See note 6 for literature on the subject. Paul Magdalino has published comprehensively on Byzantine court society and ceremonial, see for example: “Court and Capital in Byzantium,” in *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires*, Jeroen Duindan et al., eds. (Leiden, 2011), pp. 129–44.

by the Umayyad Caliphate to the representatives of the Empire. Every detail mentioned for the preparation of the reception was supervised and even a glittering *sarīr* (throne) of jewels was raised specifically for the occasion, revealing the adoption of a royal symbol, presumably non-existent in Madīna al-Zahrā', before 949.³³ Nonetheless, there are also some clues left by sources that allow us to discern political motivations.

Perhaps Constantine VII took advantage of the Cordovan diplomatic initiative to mention the situation of Crete. He also knew that 'Abd al-Rahmān III possessed a powerful fleet, which aimed at defending his interests in the Mediterranean shores of the Maghreb and even extending his mercantile interests towards the Italian shores, through diplomatic alliances.

The Book of Ceremonies, when describing the 949 expedition of Crete, mentions the fitting out of the fleets and cavalry for other Byzantine provinces. It is quite interesting that in this passage is mentioned that from the imperial fleet, three units with the *ostiarios* and *nipsistarios* Stephen were to be sent for service in Hispania.³⁴ *The Book of Ceremonies* does not add any more details to this account. It is also not possible to tell if these fleets prepared for Hispania had some relation to the expedition of Crete. *De Ceremoniis*, in the same passage, describes that fleets were also sent to Dalmatia, Dyrrhachion and Calabria, the Italian costal region to which Byzantium was still holding to, despite the loss of the Sicilian stronghold of Taormina, as pointed out by Prigent.³⁵

The Cretans were still powerful enough to threaten the Aegean Sea, and between 930 and 940, the Emirate attacked Peloponnese and central Greece, sacking Athos again.³⁶ However, the expedition of 949 was unsuccessful. There are also accounts of diplomatic exchanges between Constantinople and Crete, in 913/914, aiming to exchange prisoners taken from raids.³⁷ The Cretans also damaged the Eastern Mediterranean trade interests of Byzantium.

We know that this account refers to 949, the same year in which a Byzantine embassy was received in Cordoba. Could it be the fleet in which the Byzantine

33 Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad al-Maqqarī, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain. Naḥḥ al-tib min ghosnī al-Andalusī al-Ratīb wa Tārīkh Lisān ad-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb*, trans. Pascual de Gayangos, vol. II (London, 1843), p. 141; Cardoso, "The scenography of power in al-Andalus," p. 22.

34 Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis*, p. 664. The translators clarify that for the fleet, one unit would either correspond to a crew or to a ship and its crew. As for the *ostiarios* and *nipsistarios*, the first was a court title given to "a palace eunuch whose function was to introduce dignitaries to the emperor or empress," the second also refers to an eunuch "whose function was to give the emperor a basin and ewer with which to wash his hands before he left the palace or before other ceremonies." See Glossary of *De Ceremoniis*, p. 832.

35 Prigent, "La Politique Sicilienne de Romain Ier Lécapène," p. 67.

36 Canard, "Ikritish," p. 1084.

37 Picard, *La Mer des Califes*, p. 260.

ambassadors travelled in to al-Andalus? It could also be the case that after the first mission of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III to Constantinople and the acknowledgement of mutual concerns regarding the Fatimids, Constantine VII would have sent a fleet to be part of a joint action against Fatimid holdings both in Sicily and the Maghreb. However, this is just a hypothesis, as to my knowledge no other source mentions the dispatch of Byzantine naval power to Hispania. However, the reasons for such a favourable joint interest have been exposed above. This would also mean that Andalusī and Byzantine fleets would have met more than once, besides the expedition mentioned by the Fatimid historian, Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān.

3 Byzantium and al-Ḥakam II

After the death of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III in 961, his son, al-Ḥakam II, who participated actively in the political and diplomatic life of his father’s court, succeeded to the throne of al-Andalus. The centralization of power was one of the most important legacies of his father, and henceforth he rarely had to leave the court in military campaigns. Al-Ḥakam II is identified as the highest cultural exponent of Umayyad al-Andalus. He is the wise and intelligent caliph, famous throughout al-Andalus and Western Europe for building his own library.

Besides bequeathing his son a unified territory, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III left his heir an efficient administration, whose economic prosperity was achieved through a systematic collection of taxes. It is most likely that it was al-Ḥakam’s father who prepared him to become a distinct ruler from himself.³⁸ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III and al-Ḥakam II were the only two caliphs who held actual power over their administration and territory. Maribel Fierro, although agreeing that the second caliph of al-Andalus continued his father’s policies, suggests that his reign marks the beginning of the end for the Umayyad Western Caliphate, as he appointed his son, future Hishām II, as heir apparent. When Hishām II inherited the rule of al-Andalus he was only 11 years old, which meant that he had not yet achieved the legal age to rule, according to Muslim Sunni precepts. In fact, it was during al-Ḥakam’s rule that Ibn Abī ‘Āmir started to develop his military and political career in the court of Cordoba, where he had a strong influence on al-Ḥakam’s favourite and mother of the heir apparent, Ṣubḥ. After the death of al-Ḥakam II, he achieved the *khuttāt al-ḥijāba* (the office of chamberlain), and because Hishām was underage, he became the regent. He even took a *laqab*, which is considered as an exclusively caliphal attribute,

³⁸ Fierro, *Abderramán III*, p. 16.

being known as al-Manşūr bi-Allāh, though never declaring himself as *'amīr al-mūminīn*, or caliph. He founded the 'Amirid dynasty, as he never ceased to be the actual holder of power in al-Andalus, and his sons inherited his office. It seems that Hishām never opposed the power of his *ḥājib*. Eduardo Manzano asserts that he was seen as a "half idiot relative" by the ruling family.³⁹

Under al-Ḥakam II, exchanges with Byzantium were maintained, and he received several embassies each year from northern Christian principalities, asking for truces. Al-Ḥakam II was able to dedicate himself not only to the arts, but also to the construction and new projects conceived for Madīna al-Zahrā, the palace-city complex, as well as to external policy and diplomacy.

Upon his succession to the throne of al-Andalus, al-Ḥakam II continued his father's policy regarding foreign relations. If motivations under 'Abd al-Raḥmān III were both political and cultural, as he received a Greek translator, the books of Dioscorides and Orosius,⁴⁰ as well as columns and basins from Byzantium,⁴¹ under al-Ḥakam's rule, cultural exchanges with the Byzantine Empire went even further. The second caliph not only received Byzantine mosaics and skilled artisans for the construction of the *mihrab* of the Great Mosque of Cordoba⁴² but also is said to have exchanged books and intellectual discussions with the Byzantine emperor. A letter, sent by the Byzantine emperor – edited, translated and commented by S.M. Stern – was copied and kept in a manuscript of Madrid National Library, mentioning the request of the caliph for philosophy books and the scientific disposition of both rulers for sciences. Contemporary historians have identified the manuscript as a copy of *The Book of Causes* (*Kitāb al-'Ilāl*) by Appolonius of Tyana, philosopher of the 1st century A.D. In the end of the manuscript the content of the letter, in which the (unidentified) *basileus* offers the book to al-Ḥakam, is reproduced.⁴³

39 Eduardo Manzano, *Conquistadores, Emires y Califas: los Omeyas y la Formación de al-Andalus* (Barcelona, 2006), p. 478.

40 Ibn Abī Usayb'iya, "Appendix A. v. the life of Ibn Juljul, fo. 137," in Aḥmad al-Maqqarī, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, trans. Pascual de Gayangos, vol. 1 (London, 1843), pp. xxiii–xxvii; Ibn Abī Usayb'iya, "Appendix n. II. Vie d'Ebn Djoldjol, extraite de l'Histoire des Médecins d'Ebn-Abi-Osaïba," in Abd-Allatif, *Relation de l'Égypte*, trans. M. Silvestre de Sacy (Paris, 1810), pp. 495–500.

41 Aḥmad al-Maqqarī, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain. Naḥḥ al-tib min ghosnī al-Andalusi al-Ratīb wa Tārīkh Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb*, trans. Pascual de Gayangos. vol. 1, (London, 1840), pp. 234–36.

42 Ibn 'Idhārī, *al-Bayyān II*, p. 392.

43 S.M. Stern, "A Letter of the Byzantine Emperor to the court of the Spanish Umayyad Caliph al-Ḥakam," *al-Andalus, Revista de Estudios Árabes de las Escuelas de Madrid y Granada*, vol. XXVI, 1 (1961), 37–42.

Al-Ḥakam II, recognized as the scholar-caliph, also developed the court ceremonial, and one of his first acts as a caliph was to surround "his person with all the pomp and magnificence of the empire."⁴⁴ Despite his dedication to the arts and sciences, he persisted in his father's policy in both al-Andalus and North Africa, maintaining the Umayyad interests. However, most of the political reasons which moved both Constantine VII and 'Abd al-Raḥmān III to exchange embassies did not make sense under al-Ḥakam's rule.

In 959, Constantine VII died and his son, Romanos II, succeeded him. His state affairs were led by his *paracoemomenus* [Great chamberlain] Joseph Bringas, leaving also great military campaigns to commanders such as Nikephoros Phokas.⁴⁵ It was under Romanos II's reign that Nikephoros Phokas, together with a large squadron, was able to reconquer Crete in March 961, after a siege that lasted the whole winter, and during which the capital, Chandax, fell again into the hands of Byzantium. It was in fact an important victory for Byzantium, as finally they could control the main entrance to the Aegean Sea. Most certainly, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III knew of this Byzantine victory, as he only died in October 961 (Ramadan 350).

Signes suggests that the inexistence of exchanges from ca. 840 until ca. 946, as well as the opening of al-Andalus to Amalfitan traders, indicate mercantile interests rather than just political motivations.⁴⁶ He also advocates that a frequent exchange of embassies, from 958 onwards, between the Byzantines and the Fatimids, as well as the conquest of Egypt and the foundation of Cairo as their new capital, will determine a decrease of exchanges with al-Andalus, which becomes an inconvenient ally.⁴⁷

Even after the conquest of Crete in 961 and the agreements that might have been the result of exchanges between Byzantium and the Fatimid Caliphate from 958 onwards, al-Andalus probably remained a safe ally for the Byzantines, who most certainly did not look favourably on the increase of Fatimid power on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. The conquest of Egypt in 968 by the Fatimids and the consequent foundation of Cairo near the settlement of Fustat, must have been regarded as a potential threat to the Byzantines. Even though Nikephorus had reconquered Crete in 961, the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 968 created a new Mediterranean balance of power. The Fatimids now controlled Alexandria, one of the most important trade centres, which connected Italian cities, such as Amalfi, with North Africa and Byzantium. It must

44 Al-Maqqarī, *Nafh* II, p. 156.

45 G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 2nd English ed. (London, 1968), p. 284.

46 Signes, "Bizancio y al-Andalus," p. 236.

47 Signes, "Bizancio y al-Andalus," p. 239.

not be forgotten that settlers who established the Emirate of Crete arrived from Alexandria, then under the 'Abbasids, who saw the conquest of the island as the foundation of a stronghold capable of securing Muslim trade in the Mediterranean and, at the same time, a threat for the Byzantine Aegean Sea.⁴⁸ The Fatimids moving to Egypt did not only mean that the Andalusi shores and the Umayyad possessions in North Africa would cease being attacked by the Fatimids, it also meant that their attacks could harm Byzantine interests in the eastern Mediterranean. Evidently, Byzantine fears led to frequent embassies and inquiries towards the Fatimid court. Of course, the Fatimid Caliphate, upon the conquest of Egypt, redirected its policy towards more eastern Mediterranean shores. Nevertheless, Byzantium kept sending ambassadors to Cordoba, like those sent in 972 by John Tzimiskes.⁴⁹ Even after the Byzantine conquest of Crete or the Fatimid conquest of Cairo, the mercantile interests of Byzantium involved political motivations and political alliances. Mercantile interests in the direction of Italy were intrinsically connected to al-Andalus, as the arrival of Amalfitan traders and ambassadors from Sardinia had already demonstrated. In fact, a chain of interests appears to be established in diplomatic relations kept by Cordoba.

It was also in 972 that Fraxinetum – a Muslim settlement also known as Jabāl al-Qilāl, located in present-day La Garde-Freinet, near Saint-Tropez, Provence – was conquered by a joint force led by Guillaume I of Provence. Nevertheless, some sources place its final conquest as late as 990.⁵⁰ This might indicate that although the conquest by Guillaume was achieved in 972, there were still some Muslim settlements or Muslim attempts to take Fraxinetum back. Ibn Ḥayyān records an embassy sent from Unyū,⁵¹ after 940, with the intent to achieve an agreement that would provide safe conduct for merchants travelling to Andalusi dominions. For Ibn Ḥayyān it was clear that Fraxinetum remained an

48 Several Arab sources connect the expulsion of Andalusi adventurers from Alexandria in 210 A.H. (24/4/825–13/4/826) by the 'Abbasid governor of the city, 'Abd Allāh bin Ṭāhir, with the conquest of Crete by the followers of the Andalusi Abū Ḥafs. Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Ḥayyān assert that they surrendered to the governor of Egypt who demanded their departure and settlement in a non-Muslim possession, making arrangements for their departure to Crete, island which they elected as their new destination. See 'Īzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *Annales du Maghreb et de l'Espagne*, trans. E. Fagnan (Algiers, 1901), p. 199; Ibn Ḥayyān, *al-Muqtabis* II-1, p. 72.

49 Ibn Ḥayyān, *Anales Palatinos del Califa de Córdoba al-Hakam II, por 'Isa Ibn Ahmad al-Razi*, trans. Emilio García Gómez (Madrid, 1967), p. 93.

50 Mohamad Ballan, "Fraxinetum: An Islamic Frontier State in Tenth-Century Provence," *Comitatus* 41 (2010), p. 32.

51 Identified as Hugh of Arles or Hugh of Italy. See Ballan, "Fraxinetum," pp. 70–1; Picard, *La Mer des Califes*, p. 159.

Umayyad possession, as he mentions that direct orders were sent to its *qā'id* (military commander), Nāṣir bin Aḥmad, to ensure safe conduct for such visitors.⁵² Liutprand of Cremona leaves no doubt that Fraxinetum was a tributary state of al-Andalus, as he even mentions that the possession answered directly to Caliph 'Abd al-Raḥmān III.⁵³

We also know that Otto I sent ambassadors to Cordoba in 954 to "settle peace and friendship in order to cease Saracen pirate attacks."⁵⁴ Although not mentioning directly Fraxinetum, it does mention the intention of peace with the first caliph of Cordoba. Fraxinetum and its activities were of interest to Byzantium, as Hugh of Arles also exchanged embassies with Romanos Lekapenos with the intention of asking for military help, in order to end Muslim rule over Fraxinetum, which, in the end, turned out not to be necessary as he made peace with the Muslims.⁵⁵ Furthermore, when Otto I despatched his embassy to the court of Cordoba, he also sent a mission to Constantinople.⁵⁶

Thus, during al-Ḥakam II's rule, Fraxinetum remained active in Frankish and Italian shores, where Byzantium maintained mercantile interests. It should also be underlined that the Byzantines had not yet lost hope of reconquering Sicily. It seems that Basil II, after his military success on other fronts, started preparations for a campaign against the Fatimid rule in Sicily. Nevertheless, he died in 1025, before he could attempt it.⁵⁷ We know that Nikephorus Phokas, who conquered Crete, a conquest that was considered impossible by previous emperors, did attempt a failed expedition against Sicily in 964–65.⁵⁸

Byzantium knew that the Umayyad caliphal fleets went as far as Alexandria and even devastated Fatimid territories, as happened during 'Abd al-Raḥmān III's reign. These fleets had a double goal, as they transported goods intended for trade, and at the same time, had military and political purposes. Thus, although the cultural stance of such exchanges is undeniable, the chain of influences and alliances sought among 10th-century Mediterranean powers must be acknowledged rather than complying only with the traditional historiographical framework of rivalries.

52 Ibn Hayyān, *al-Muqtabis* v, pp. 341–42.

53 Liutprand of Cremona, *The complete works of Liutprand of Cremona*, trans. Paolo Squatriti (Washington, D.C., 2007), pp. 45–6.

54 Juan, Abad de San Arnulfo, "La embajada del emperador de Alemania Otón I al califa de Córdoba Abderrahmán III. Vida de San Juan de Gortz," trans. Paz y Melia, *Boletín de la Academia de Ciencias, Bellas Letras y Nobles Artes de Córdoba* 33 (1931), p. 145.

55 Liutprand of Cremona, *The complete works*, p. 176. Ballan, "Fraxinetum," p. 29.

56 Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 283.

57 Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 314.

58 Prigent, "La Politique Sicilienne de Romain Ier Lécapène," p. 64.

Bibliography

- Ballan, Mohamad, "Fraxinetum: An Islamic Frontier State in Tenth-Century Provence," *Comitatus* 41 (2010), 23–76.
- Cardoso, Elsa, "Diplomacy and oriental influence in the court of Cordoba (9th–10th centuries)" MA diss. (University of Lisbon, 2015).
- Cardoso, Elsa, "The scenography of power in al-Andalus: the embassy of Yahya al-Ghazāl to Constantinople," *Hamsa. Journal of Judaic and Islamic Studies* (2015), 54–64.
- Cardoso, Elsa, "The scenography of power in al-Andalus and the 'Abbasid and Byzantine ceremonials: Christian ambassadorial receptions in the court of Cordoba in a comparative perspective," *Medieval Encounters. Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue* (January, 2018), 1–45, DOI: 10.1163/15700674-12340007.
- Christides, Vassilios, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs (ca. 824). A turning point in the struggle between Byzantium and Islam* (Athens, 1984).
- Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, trans. Ann Moffat and Maxeme Tall, vol. 2 (Canberra, 2012).
- Cutler, Anthony, "Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab and Related Economies," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001), 247–78.
- Drocourt, Nicholas, "Christian-Muslim diplomatic relations. An overview of the main sources and themes of encounter (600–1000)," in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 2 (900–1050)*, David Thomas et al., eds. (Leiden, 2010), pp. 29–72.
- Drocourt, Nicholas, "Passing on Political Information between Major Powers: The Key Role of Ambassadors between Byzantium and Some of its Neighbours," *Al-Masaq* 24: 1 (2012), 91–112, DOI: 10.1080/09503110.2012.655586.
- Fierro, Maribel, *Abderramán III y el califato omeya de Córdoba* (San Sebastián, 2011).
- Fierro, Maribel, "Porque sucedió 'Abd al-Rahman a su abuelo el emir 'Abd Allah," *Al-Qantara* XXVI, 2 (2005), 365–66.
- Halm, Heinz, *The Empire of the Mahdi. The Rise of the Fatimids*, trans. Michael Bonner (Leiden, 1996).
- Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, Hans Thurn, ed., CFHB 5 (Berlin, 1973).
- Kresten, Otto, "Zur Chrysographie in den Auslandsschreiben der byzantinischen Kaiser," *Römische historische Mitteilungen*, 40 (1998), pp. 139–86.
- Lirola Delgado, Jorge, "El poder naval de al-Andalus en la época del califato omeya (siglo IV hégira/X era cristiana)" (Ph.D diss. University of Granada, 1991).
- Liutprand of Cremona, *The complete works of Liudprand of Cremona*, trans. Paolo Squatriti (Washington, D.C., 2007).
- Magdalino, Paul, "Court and Capital in Byzantium," in *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires*, ed. Jeroen Duindan et al., eds. (Leiden, 2011), pp. 129–44.

- Manzano Moreno, Eduardo, "Byzantium and al-Andalus in the ninth century," in *Byzantium in the ninth century: Dead or alive?*, Leslie Brubaker, ed. (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 215–27.
- Manzano, Eduardo, *Conquistadores, Emires y Califas: los Omeyas y la Formación de al-Andalus* (Barcelona, 2006).
- Ostrogorsky, G., *History of the Byzantine State*, 2nd English ed. (London, 1968).
- Picard, Christophe, *La Mer des Califes. Une histoire de la Méditerranée musulmane* (Paris, 2015).
- Prigent, Vivien, "La Politique Sicilienne de Romain Ier Lécapène," in *Guerre et société au Moyen Âge. Byzance Occident (VIIIe–XIIIe siècle)*, Dominique Barthélemy and Jean-Claude Cheynet, eds. (Paris, 2010), pp. 63–84.
- Signes Codoñer, Juan, "Bizancio y al-Andalus en los siglos IX y X," in *Bizancio y la Península Ibérica. De la Antigüedad Tardía a la Edad Moderna*, Inmaculada Pérez Martín and Pedro Bádenas de la Peña, eds. (Madrid, 2004), pp. 177–246.
- Stern, S.M., "A Letter of the Byzantine Emperor to the court of the Spanish Umayyad Caliph al-Hakam," *al-Andalus, Revista de Estudios Árabes de las Escuelas de Madrid y Granada*, vol. XXVI, 1 (1961), 37–42.
- Sypiański, Jakub, "Arabo-Byzantine relations in the 9th and 10th centuries as an area of cultural rivalry," in *Proceedings of the international Symposium Byzantium and The Arab World Encounter of Civilizations*, A. Kralides and A. Gkoutzioukostas, eds. (Thessaloniki, 2013), pp. 465–78.
- Valérian, Dominique, "Amalfi e il mondo musulmano: un laboratorio per le città marinare italiane?," *Rassegna del Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana* XX (2010), 199–212.
- Wortley, John, trans., *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History 811–1057* (Cambridge, 2010).